

Conservation Connections



St. Louis Regional Newsletter

Missouri Department of Conservation

February 2012

For Love of Maple Trees

Kevin McCarthy, Interpretive Center Manager

I have a problem... and from what I've heard, the first step to recovery is admitting you have a problem, right? Well here it goes... "I am crazy for maple trees!" Ridiculous, I know. All the Foresters think I'm crazy too and I know that this love of maples is just not healthy. I know that maple trees shade out more wildlife-beneficial oak trees and native forest understory plants. I know that their wood doesn't burn as hot in a wood stove or camp fire, or that their wood isn't the best for making baseball bats... but I just can't explain this crazy love of maple trees.

Oh wait... yes I can... What I actually love is maple sugaring! As I enter into my fifth season of maple sugaring at Rockwoods Reservation, I realize that what at first was simply a job duty has quickly turned into a passion. I love spending time in the woods in winter, listening to the drips of sap into metal buckets like a metronome keeping blissful pace with my footsteps over snow-covered slopes, noticing the watchful

red-shouldered hawk as it stares curiously at me from a perch while I stoke the wood fire to boil sap into syrup and sugar, and the satisfaction of sore muscles from carrying heavy gallons of sap and firewood up and down hills while everyone else is hiding the winter away indoors wishing they could get out. To me, February doesn't get any better than spending time in nature with friends, fellow staff, volunteers and members of our audience, sharing a passion for maple sugar with all who attend our programs. You won't want to miss this amazing winter experience so close to home.

I hope that you will join us for a maple sugar program this February and definitely don't miss the **Maple Sugar Festival on Saturday, February 4 at Rockwoods Reservation**. You'll pick up tips to tap a tree or two in your yard, collect sap and make delicious maple syrup or sugar for your home.



Be sure to pick up a copy of a "Backyard Guide to Maple Sugaring" when you're at the Festival for a handy guide to working with your maple trees. By the end of winter, who knows, you might end up like me wondering how you could ever live without a maple tree.



The Missouri Department of Conservation is celebrating our 75th anniversary. On Nov. 3, 1936, voters approved Amendment Four, creating our agency and the beginning of Missouri's unique, citizen-led conservation story. Many of the successful partnerships and programs that have helped to restore the fish, forest, and wildlife resources of Missouri, as well as the challenges ahead, will be highlighted throughout the next year.

Watch for more information in the *Missouri Conservationist* magazine and on the web: www.mdc.mo.gov

Columbia Bottom Conservation Area

February 2012

801 Strodtman Road, St. Louis, MO 63138 Office hours are Wednesday - Friday from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.;
Saturday - Sunday from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

**For reservations call (314) 877 - 6014 Wednesday through Friday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.;
Saturday and Sunday 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.**

If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on our waiting list. Interpretive services are available for those with hearing loss with 5 days notice. From I-270 north take the Riverview Drive exit (last Missouri exit); go north approximately 2.8 miles. Riverview Drive becomes Columbia Bottom Road at its intersection with Larimore Road. The entrance is on the right-hand side.

Visit www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/areas/bottom

2 Tots on The Trail: What's So Special About Groundhogs?

Thursday 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

(Ages 3 - 5) What is their secret? Can they really predict an early spring? Discover the answers to these questions and more through stories, games, and other fun activities. We'll go outside to look for the groundhog's secrets, so dress for the weather. (Reservations begin January 19.)



11 Shed Antler Hunt

Saturday Noon - 3 p.m.

(Ages 10 & Up) Got cabin fever? Let us "shed" some light on your situation with a hunt. We'll show you the ethical way to look for sheds and the common conditions for finding them. With the right attitude and know-how, you'll rack them in and score some points! Dress for the weather. Wear sturdy walking shoes or boots. (Reservations begin January 28.)



25 Girl Scout Open House

Saturday 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

(Daisies & Up) Let's be adventurous! Join girl scouts of all ages to explore Columbia Bottom and discover nature. Visit our displays, go for a hike, and more! Pack a lunch for a special picnic with a Naturalist who will answer your questions and discuss environmental careers at noon. Let us know if you are looking to achieve a certain badge. We may be able to help! Dress prepared to go outdoors and get ready to have a great time. (Reservations begin February 8.)

4 Coyotes Howling at the Full Snow Moon

Saturday 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

(Ages 7 & Up) Did you know that coyotes play an important role in the wildlife community? We will help you to discover how they fit into the ecosystem, why they howl, and when is a good time to hear them. Experience the soft feel of a coyote pelt and touch the sharp edges of their teeth in a skull. After learning about the "little prairie wolves," as Lewis and Clark called them, we will take a short hike in the crisp, clear winter night to listen for their howling on the prairie under a full Snow Moon. Then, we'll return to the visitor center to warm up with hot beverages. (Reservations begin January 21.)



August A. Busch Memorial Conservation Area

2360 Hwy D, St. Charles, MO 63304 Office hours are Monday - Friday from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

For reservations call (636) 441- 4554 Monday through Friday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on our waiting list. Interpretive services are available for those with hearing loss with 5 days notice. From I-40 take Hwy 94 south to Hwy D; turn west on Hwy D for approximately 2 miles. The area entrance is on the north side of Hwy D. Visit www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/cnc/busch



11 Grow Native at Home

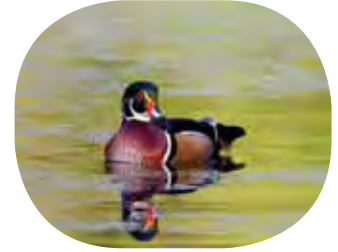
Saturday 1 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

(Adults) It's time to start thinking about spring gardening projects. Have you ever considered growing native plants? Naturally resilient native grasses, sedges, flowers, shrubs, vines and trees are great for home landscaping. They solve common gardening problems and attract butterflies, hummingbirds, song birds and other wildlife. When you grow native, you'll be helping restore Missouri's declining natural diversity. Come and learn how to put native plants to work in your home landscape. (Reservations begin January 27.)

11 Do You Like to Bird Watch?

Saturday 9 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

(Families Ages 10 & Up) If so, why not become a citizen scientist and participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)! Come to an interactive program to learn about the GBBC and how you can tally the birds that you see in your own backyard. Anyone can participate from beginner to advanced and only 15 minutes of your time is required the weekend of February 17 - 20 to be a part of the GBBC. You will learn the basics of how the GBBC works, how data is entered in the Cornell Lab of Ornithology website, and then take a walk on the Fallen Oak Trail to do a practice bird count at the bird feeder station. Please dress for the weather and bring your binoculars and field guides to help gather data for your beloved birds. (Reservations begin January 27.)



18 Dresser Island Conservation Area Hike

Saturday 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

(Adults) Where is there a place in winter that you can hike along a big river and see pelicans, ducks, geese, eagles, muskrat houses and possibly trumpeter swans? It is called Dresser Island, and it is located near West Alton in St. Charles County. Join us for a 6.5 mile hike as we look for wildlife along the Mississippi River and enjoy the winter scenery that our big rivers offer so near to St. Louis. We will also participate in the Cornell University's Great Backyard Bird Count during our hike around the island. (Reservations begin February 3.)

Forest Park Office

5595 Grand Drive, St. Louis, MO 63112 Office hours are Monday - Friday from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

For reservations call (314) 877-1309 Monday through Friday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on our waiting list. Interpretive services are available for those with hearing loss with 5 days notice. From I-44 take Kingshighway north to West Pine Boulevard, turn left. Follow West Pine to Lindell, turn left onto Lindell. Continue on Lindell past Union Drive to Cricket, turn left. Take first available right onto Grand Drive. The Visitors Center is the tan brick, red tile-roofed building with arched windows, and a clock tower. It will be on the right side of the street. Free parking is available in the double lot to the left or on the street.

16 Gifts To and From Nature

Thursday 10 a.m. - Noon

(Ages 7 - 11) Nature is all around us! Use natural objects that we collect to pique your interest and to create a masterpiece all your own. There is no one-way direction to this discovery. Several art supplies and crafting materials will be provided. Then we will turn the tables. Winter is a great time to create some gifts to give back to our furry and feathered friends. You'll leave with a gift for you and one for the wildlife in your backyard. We will be outdoors for a short period. Meet at the Dennis & Judith Jones Visitor and Education Center and be sure to bring warm clothes for the outdoor portion. (Reservations begin February 2.)



Rockwoods Reservation

February 2012

2751 Glencoe Road, Wildwood, MO 63038 Office hours are Monday - Friday from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

For reservations call (636) 458-2236 Monday through Friday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on our waiting list. Interpretive services are available for those with hearing loss with 5 days notice. From I-44 take Hwy 109 north 4 miles to Woods Avenue; left on Woods Avenue, then immediately right on Glencoe Road. From Manchester Road take Hwy 109 south 2 miles to Woods Avenue; right on Woods Avenue, then immediately right on Glencoe Road.

Visit <http://www.mdc.mo.gov/regions/st-louis/rockwoods-reservation>

4 Maple Sugar Festival

Saturday 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

(All Ages) It's maple sugar time! You've been waiting all winter and it's finally here! Venture outdoors to Rockwoods Reservation and experience conservation success and forest resources at their finest - and sweetest! Visit the sugar bush to see trees tapped and collect the precious sap. Boil the sap down at the Three Kettle Station like Colonial Americans and using a more modern method at the Sugar Shack. Taste the delicious syrup, sugar on snow taffy and pure maple sugar. More importantly, learn do to all of this right in your own backyard. It's a day your whole family will enjoy. (No reservations required. Parking available at Rockwoods Reservation and LaSalle Springs Middle School. Festival may be altered due to extreme winter weather, call 636-458-2236 for information.)



17 Homeschool Special: Maple Sugaring

Friday Noon - 1:30 p.m.

(All Ages) Attention homeschoolers! Join us to embark on a Missouri tradition: maple sugaring. You will learn the history of maple sugaring, visit the sugar bush to collect sap and learn how to boil it down into syrup. Of course, you'll also get the chance to enjoy samples of Rockwoods' own maple syrup! Dress for the weather as this program is outdoors and part of the trail is not stroller accessible. (Reservations begin February 3.)

22 Homeschool Special: Maple Sugaring

Wednesday Noon - 1:30 p.m.

(All Ages) Attention homeschoolers! Join us to embark on a Missouri tradition: maple sugaring. You will learn the history of maple sugaring, visit the sugar bush to collect sap and learn how to boil it down into syrup. Of course, you'll also get the chance to enjoy samples of Rockwoods' own maple syrup! Dress for the weather as this program is outdoors and part of the trail is not stroller accessible. (Reservations begin February 8.)

23 After School Session: Maple Sugaring

Thursday 4 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

(All Ages) Did your child's school miss out on making a field trip to Rockwoods for maple sugar? No problem, bring your little learners out for this "after school session" to embark on a Missouri tradition: maple sugaring. We will learn the history of maple sugaring, visit the sugar bush to collect sap and learn how to boil it down into syrup. Of course, you'll also get the chance to enjoy samples of Rockwoods' own maple syrup! Dress for the weather as this program is outdoors and part of the trail is not stroller accessible. (Reservations begin February 9.)



25 Grow Native at Home

Saturday 9:30 a.m. - 11 a.m.

(Adults) It's time to start thinking about spring gardening projects. Have you ever considered growing native plants? Naturally resilient native grasses, sedges, flowers, shrubs, vines and trees are great for home landscaping. They solve common gardening problems and attract butterflies, hummingbirds, song birds, and other wildlife. Come and learn how to put native plants to work in your home landscape. (Reservations begin February 10.)

Busch Shooting Range and Outdoor Education Center

February 2012

2360 Hwy D, St. Charles, MO 63304

Hours are: December 1 - March 31 open Monday, Tuesday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

April 1 - November 30 open Monday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., and Tuesday from 2 p.m. - 8 p.m.

Closed all State and Federal Holidays.

For program reservations call (636) 441-4554 Monday through Friday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on our waiting list. Interpretive services are available for those with hearing loss with 5 days notice. From I-40 take Hwy 94 south to Hwy D; turn west on Hwy D for approximately 5 miles. The area entrance is on the south side of Hwy D. Visit <http://www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/ranges/busch>

2 & 4 Discover Hunting: Youth Pheasant Clinic & Hunt

Thursday 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
& Saturday 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

(Ages 11 - 16) This is a great opportunity for young hunters to learn about safety and the proper techniques to improve their hunting skills for hunting upland game birds. The clinic will be Thursday at Busch CA Headquarters in the classroom. The topics that will be covered are safety, habitat, firearms, clothing, and hunting techniques. Youths must attend the clinic and be hunter education certified to participate in the hunt. The hunt will be held at the Missouri Gun & Quail Club near Wright City, Missouri on Saturday morning. (Reservations begin January 2.)



9, 11 Discover Nature Women: Pheasant Clinic & Hunt

Thursday 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.,
Saturday 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

(Ages 14 & Up) This is a great opportunity for women new to hunting to learn the skills needed for hunting upland game birds. We will discuss safety, habitat, firearms, clothing, and hunting techniques. The clinic will be held on Thursday in the classroom at Busch CA Headquarters. The hunt will be on Saturday at the Missouri Gun & Quail Club near Wright City, Missouri. You must participate in the clinic and be hunter education-certified to participate in the hunt. (Reservations begin January 10.)



22, 23, 25 Basic Handguns

Wednesday 6 p.m. - 9:30 p.m. &
Thursday 6 p.m. - 8 p.m. or Saturday
7:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

(Age 13 & up) This program is designed to teach novice students how to safely handle and shoot a handgun. We will cover topics such as safety, actions, calibers, grip, stance, and sight picture. The first part of the class will be held on Wednesday in the classroom at Busch CA Headquarters. Then half the class will go to the shooting range Thursday evening and the other half will go Saturday morning for some hands-on experience. You can bring your own firearms and ammunition or use ours. (Reservations begin January 23.)

28 Discover Hunting: Reloading Metallic Cartridges

Tuesday 6 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

(Ages 8 & Up) This program will cover how to safely and successfully reload rifle and handgun cartridges. This class covers all of the equipment, components and techniques that you need to reload safely and proficiently. (Reservations begin January 30.)



For a complete listing of all Hunter Education and Bowhunter Education classes throughout the region, visit the web at www.mdc.mo.gov and click on the "Hunter Education" link on the right of the page.

Jay Henges Shooting Range and Outdoor Education Center

1100 Antire Road, High Ridge, MO 63049

Range Hours: May 1 - August 31: Wednesday 1 p.m. - 7:30 p.m., Thursday - Sunday 10 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

September 1 - April 30: Wednesday - Sunday 10 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Closed on Mondays and Tuesdays and all State and Federal Holidays.

For program reservations call (636) 938-9548 Wednesday through Sunday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on our waiting list. Interpretive services are available for those with hearing loss with 5 days notice. From the east/St. Louis: I-44 west to Beaumont/Antire Road, exit 269. Left over I-44 to Antire Road. Right on Antire road. One hundred feet to entrance. Left into driveway. From the west/Eureka: I-44 east to Beaumont/Antire Road, exit 269. Follow exit lane around to top.

Visit <http://www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/ranges/henges>



2 & 4 Basic Handgun, Part 1 & 2

Thursday 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Saturday 8 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

(Ages 16 & Up) This two-part program will include handgun operation, shooting fundamentals, safety, maintenance, and safe storage. We will start with a classroom session on Thursday evening, then a live-fire session on Saturday morning. Although equipment and ammunition will be provided, you may bring your own. Those under 18 must be accompanied by an adult. (Reservations begin January 2.)

8 Introduction to Firearms

Wednesday 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

(Ages 8 & Up) Let's take a look at various types of firearms including rifles, shotguns, and handguns. We will examine the various types of actions and provide a hands-on demonstration of their working mechanisms. The presentation will include basic safety, home security, and general maintenance. This is a classroom program and does not include live shooting. If you are not familiar or comfortable with firearms, this is an informative educational introduction to firearms without the noise. (Reservations begin January 8).

12 Trigger Time - Handgun

Sunday 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

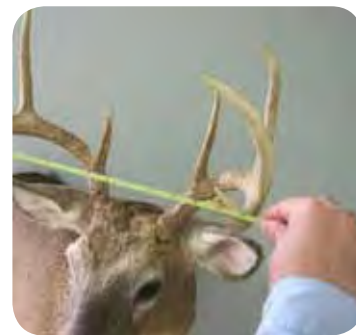
(Ages 18 & Up) Trigger Time is "hands-on" personal instruction designed to make you a better marksman. There is no classroom time, just expert one-on-one instruction from one of our highly qualified staff. The instructor will observe shooting by each individual participant and offer suggestions on grip, stance, trigger-pull, sight alignment and the safe handling of firearms -- all as may be relevant. Participants will be required to provide their own handguns and ammunition (at least 50 rounds). (Reservations begin January 12.)



18 Antler Scoring

Saturday 9 a.m. - Noon.

(All ages) Now that your antlers have dried for the required 60 days, it's time to check the official score of that big rack. We will have official scorers on duty. You may also bring shed antlers to be scored. Antlers do not have to be from this past season; any previous rack can be scored. Bring your antlers to the education center this Saturday and see what your deer scores! (No reservations required.)



23 Home Firearm Safety

Thursday 6:30 p.m. - 8 p.m.

(Ages 11 & Up) This is a basic course on the rules for safe gun handling. We will become familiar with identifying various types of firearms and ammunition and how they function. Instruction on cleaning and safe storage is also emphasized in this course. We'll take a look at the NRA Eddie Eagle® safety program for kids. This is a good place to start if you are a new gun owner, or just interested in firearms. (Reservations begin January 23.)

Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center

11715 Cragwold Road, Kirkwood, MO 63122

Building hours: Tuesday through Saturday: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. Sunday and Monday: Closed

Area and trails: Open seven days a week 8 a.m. - 6 p.m. during Central Standard Time and 8 a.m. - 8 p.m. during Daylight Saving Time.

14 Nature's Niche: Maple Sugaring at Rockwoods

Tuesday 11:15 a.m. - 2:15 p.m.

(Ages 50 & Up) Take a trip to Rockwoods and learn about maple sugaring! We'll discuss the history, visit the sugar bush to collect sap, and learn the process and equipment needed to create the sweet treat of maple syrup. We'll even get to taste the results of this Missouri tradition! The entire program will be conducted outdoors, so please wear comfortable shoes and dress warmly for the weather. Participants should eat lunch before arriving at Powder Valley. Call to reserve a space to attend, and in addition reserve a spot in one of our vans to carpool, or you can choose to meet us at Rockwoods. A snack will be provided. (Reservations begin January 31.)



14 A Forest Valentine

Tuesday 9:30 a.m. - 11 a.m.

(Ages 7 & Up) Forests, fish, and wildlife - we love them! Let's make them a creative, beautiful Valentine's card! And let's celebrate our love of nature with story, song, games, and (weather permitting) a nature walk. Also, play with a wide variety of forest, fish and wildlife puppets, such as trees, fish, birds, and wild mammals. (Reservations begin January 31.)



15 Feathery Friends

Wednesday 10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

(Ages 3 - 6) Winter is a great time to look for birds! We'll discuss what makes a bird a bird, make some binoculars, and if the weather permits, go on a birding hike to spot them in the wild. (Reservations begin February 1.)



23 Discover Nature Families: Our Favorite Swallow, The Purple Martin

Thursday 6 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

(Families) Next month the purple martins arrive back to the St. Louis area. After a long flight from South America, they will need insects and nesting sites. Participants will learn about these great travelers, help clean out the Powder Valley purple martin apartment house, and make a gourd martin house. (Reservations begin February 9.)



28 Spring is on Its Way!

Tuesday 1 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

(Homeschool ages 8 & Up) There are still a few weeks until spring officially arrives, but that doesn't stop nature from peeking through the snow and ice once in a while! Enjoy an afternoon at Powder Valley as we discuss signs of early spring. Then we will hit the trails for the prospect of a real-life encounter with some of those signs we discussed. Keep in mind that the hike is 1 and 1/5 miles in length, so dress for the weather and wear comfortable hiking shoes. (Reservations begin February 14.)

Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center **For reservations call (314) 301-1500**

February 2012

If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on our waiting list. Interpretive services are available for those with hearing loss with five days notice. From I-44 take Lindbergh (Route 61/67) to Watson Road. Go west on Watson Road to Geyer Road. Go north on Geyer Road to Cragwold Road then one mile west on Cragwold Road. Visit www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/cnc/powder

Bird Watching from Powder Valley's Newest Feature

Powder Valley's newest feature is a bird blind in the bird feeding area. The blind was made possible in part by a gift from the Missouri Nature and Environmental Photographers (MoNEP). In addition to its gift, MoNEP supports Powder Valley Nature Center by exhibiting photos in the nature center, highlighting Powder Valley areas in their photos, and general good will. Visit <http://www.monep.org> for information about MoNEP.



Visitors may access the blind from the mulched trail off Tanglevine Trail. View the many species of birds visiting the bird feeders and the water feature. You might also see deer, both does and bucks, visiting the area. While on the trail and in the blind be very still and quiet. Bring your binoculars and bird field guides to enhance your experience.

Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center **Hallway Exhibit**

Night Visions:

The natural world under twilight, moonlight, and starlight

A lot of people may not think of night as the best time to take pictures. But while many photographers are putting their cameras away, I'm usually getting mine out. I've been in love with the night sky and the stars all my life. After becoming interested in photography, it seemed only natural to bring the two together. The world looks different after the sun goes down . . . unique, mysterious, and intriguing. These photographs are a collection of twilight scenes, starscapes, long exposure star trails, and moonlit landscapes, all revealed by the photographic magic of long exposures.

- Dan Zarlenga, Media Specialist



This publication is produced locally. Please e-mail us at ConservationConnections@mdc.mo.gov with questions, comments, or concerns. Thank you.